

auto industry during this downturn. This stimulus is dangerous to your health and the economy.

ECONOMIC RECOVERY BILL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MALONEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. MALONEY. Mr. Speaker, the January job numbers told Americans something they already knew. Things are bad. They are bad all over in almost every sector of the economy and almost every section of the country.

In a hearing before the Joint Economic Committee, I asked the commissioner of the Bureau of Labor Statistics if there was any bright spots in the labor report. And he said, and I quote, "No. No good news comes to mind."

These latest job losses add to the overwhelming evidence that we must get a recovery package to the President's desk fast. People are hurting and crying out all across the country for help from the people in this Chamber.

More than 3.6 million jobs have been lost since the recession began in 2007, including the nearly 600,000 jobs shed in January alone. Six hundred thousand jobs is equivalent to all the workers in the State of Maine.

My home State of New York has been especially hard hit. Almost 48,000 jobs were slashed. Familiar and storied names, such as Macy's, Estee Lauder, Time Warner, Bloomberg News, and many others, have laid off employees.

We are now hearing that seven States have already exhausted their unemployment insurance, and another 11 States may see their funds exhausted by the end of 2009.

More than 2 million homes have gone into foreclosure, and millions of other homeowners find themselves owing more to the bank than their homes are worth. Because of lost jobs, millions also lost their health insurance. Many have lost their savings. An estimated \$6 trillion in personal wealth has simply evaporated.

A solution to this crisis requires a bold action and addresses the magnitude of our economic woes, and the American Recovery and Reinvestment Plan will do just that. The recovery package will create or save an estimated 4 million jobs across a variety of sectors. It will soften the downturn and foster a solid economic recovery that benefits all Americans.

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce has called for the passage of the Recovery Act. The National Governors Association says that they support the bill. The bill even has the support of most GOP Governors.

The latest Gallup poll shows that 80 percent of Americans believe that passing a new stimulus plan is either "important," or "critically important." Even 66 percent of Republicans told the Gallup pollsters that it is either important or critically important to pass the

bill. Perhaps because they know that America's schools, roads, bridges, and water systems are in disrepair, and this creates a drag on economic growth.

We have an historic opportunity to make the investments necessary to modernize our public infrastructure. We can begin to transition to a clean energy economy that will make us more competitive in the future.

Yes, there are conflicting visions of the perfect bill. Some Nobel Laureates in economics say the stimulus is not big enough. Some would have us do less. But now is the time to put aside whatever differences we might have in our economic theories and put the needs of our country first.

The building where the Joint Economic Committee holds its hearings is dedicated to the memory of Senator Everett Dirksen. On the plaque we pass every day, it reads, and I quote, "His unerring sense of the possible enabled him to know when to compromise, by such men are our freedoms retained. His greatness will forever be an inspiration."

President Obama and the Democrats are ready to embark on a bold, commonsense plan to turn this economy around, to address the fierce urgency of now, and to get this country back on its feet. We urge you to stand with us shoulder to shoulder as we act to put America back to work.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GOHMERT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. GOHMERT addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. PAUL) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. PAUL addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. DANIEL E. LUNGREN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. DANIEL E. LUNGREN of California addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

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OSCAR ELIAS BISCET

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida. This last December 6, 2 months ago, was the ninth anniversary of the imprisonment—the cruel and unjust imprisonment in a cold and damp cell in the most inhuman of condi-

tions—of the great Cuban leader in the fight for democracy and human rights in that enslaved island, Dr. Oscar Elias Biscet. Dr. Biscet is prohibited from even walking in the prison's yard, and he is incarcerated along with common criminals.

Dr. Biscet was released from prison in 2003, for a few weeks, before being rearrested and subsequently sentenced to 25 years in the gulag due to his peaceful pro-democracy activities.

Biscet personifies the opposition to the brutal totalitarian regime Fidel Castro and his brother, who the dictator has now given some additional titles to because of the ailing tyrant's failing health.

Dr. Biscet is an admirer of Gandhi and Martin Luther King.

A physician by training, he began his opposition to the totalitarian regime by speaking out against the regime's forced abortion when there is any indication whatsoever that a pregnancy may have an abnormality policy. Biscet described that policy as inhuman. He was immediately fired from his job at the hospital, prohibited from practicing his profession as a physician, and his wife Elsa Morejon was also fired from her job as a practicing nurse. Within hours, the couple and their son were summarily evicted from their apartment and their physical possessions thrown into the street.

Fortunately, an elderly patient of Elsa allowed the family to move into her house. Dr. Biscet continued peacefully denouncing the totalitarian regime's absolute denial of human rights to the Cuban people; and, because of that, he has been unjustly and cruelly imprisoned for 9 years and counting.

Hundreds of other brave human rights activists are also suffering in the political prisons of the Cuban totalitarian dictatorship for the crime of supporting democracy and liberty and opposing tyranny, including 23 known journalists thrown into dungeons because of articles they wrote that bothered the dictator. No regime in the world has more journalists in prison, with the possible exception of another totalitarian dictatorship in an obviously much larger nation, communist China.

A few weeks ago, the respected international organization, Reporters Without Borders, gave one of those Cuban journalists in the gulag, Ricardo Gonzalez Alfonso, sentenced by the Cuban tyrant to 20 years in prison in 2003, and currently in very poor health, the Reporters Without Borders Journalist of the Year Award. Reporters Without Border is to be commended, Mr. Speaker.

Three other Cuban prisoners of conscience, Aldolfo Fernandez Sainz, Pedro Arguelles Moran, and Antonio Diaz Sanchez, are known to have begun a hunger strike due to brutal conditions they are subjected to. Where is the outrage, Mr. Speaker? Where is the international solidarity? Where is there one word of coverage of this in the world's press?